CA

PF Irish in California

UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER, INC.
2700 - 47TH AVE
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94116

Sources for Studies of the Irish in California: An Annotated Bibliography

Compiled by
Sheila K. O'Neill
1984

Patrick J. Dowling Library
Irish Cultural Centre of California
2700 45th Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94116

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this bibliography is to give a person doing research on the early settlement of the Irish in San Francisco an interdisciplinary group of sources on the topic. The following list comes from a variety of sources, including journals, books and dissertations. Most of the writings refer to the Irish in San Francisco during the mid-19th to early 20th centuries.

The published literature on this topic is less than full in its coverage, since most studies focus on Irish settlement in the Northeastern United States. Writings about the Irish on the West Coast come in response to the recognition of the importance of the role of regional economic and social variation in the shaping of American ethnic experience. Within North America, conditions differed considerably, offering even unskilled newcomers various degrees and kinds of opportunities.

The common perception of the Irish in America among general historians has been drawn largely from studies of Irish immigrant communities in the Northeastern cities of the United States. The long established interpretation of Irish immigrant experience has been one of uprooted peasants, escaping from famine and disease, arriving in America on the eve of a vast industrial and urban expansion. Economic and social mobility was a long, slow process and real sucess stories were uncommon.

The experience of the Irish in California, and especially in San Francisco, was different from that of the rest of Irish America in the years 1848-1920. California at the start of its Irish time was sparsely settled and loosely controlled by Mexican officials. The cessation of California and the Southwest to the United States in 1848 and the simultaneous discovery of gold created an instant state. The metropolis of San Francisco, which served as a base camp and supply center for the interior mining regions, was the dominant center of economic and social life.

Into this environment came Irish and their families, often after having been in the Northeast for a number of years before migrating West. By 1860, nearly one-third of the total population of San Francisco were Irish born or children of Irish born. Irish Catholics were found at every level of the city's economy, from the Silver Kings, prominent bankers, and leading manufacturers to skilled artisan and common laborers. In the first decade of its existence, California favored Irish in high state and federal offices. In the City itself, public office proved more accessible to the first generation Irish than those in the East. As early as 1867, San Francisco elected it's first Irish born mayor, Frank McCoppin.

Since the history of the Irish is inextricably woven into the history of urban politics, labor and the Catholic Church in America, this bibliography would be of interest to researchers in those fields, as well as to social scientists in general. Additionally, it would serve the needs of a college senior or first year graduate student doing a fairly extensive paper on the topic of the Irish in California. There is little here that is of a very complex nature, but there is enough information that it would take some selective judgement and good research skills to review the range of material and develop a focus for research.

Recommended Readings

Quigley, Hugh, The Irish Race in California and on the Pacific Coast. San Francisco : A. Roman & Co., 1878.

Intended as the first in a series on the "Irish Race" on the West Coast, this volume contains largely biographical sketches of Irish statesmen, military officials, and successful businessmen. Chapters on San Francisco suggest the flavor of the city in the late 19th century and discuss the role of the Irish in municipal government and public sector employment. It also provides insight into the Irish attitudes toward Chinese immigrants at the time.

Pendergast, Thomas F., Forgotten Pioneers; Irish Leaders in Early California. San Francisco: The Trade Pressroom, 1942.

Thirty-three chapters of biographical sketches of California pioneers of Gaelic origin are set in successive phases of California history, from Alta California through Mexican and then American regimes. An interesting and little known aspect of the Irish in the West is covered here: that of the Irish-Spaniards who were involved in the possession and settling of early California by Spain.

Walsh, James P., (Ed.), The San Francisco Irish, 1850-1976. San Francisco : The Irish Literary Society, 1978.

A collection of ten brief essays, four of which relate to the stated theme in the Introduction, which is to examine the case of the Irish in San Francisco as a means of testing the theory that the farther west the Irish relocated, the easier and swifter their social advance. The remaining six essays are an assortment of biographical sketches of individual Irish-Americans from the City's history; All are useful for further analysis of the social and political history of San Francisco.

Burchell, R. A., The San Francisco Irish, 1848-1880. _Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1979.

A carefully documented monograph on the Irish community of San Francisco in the period 1848-1880. Based on assessment of the census records and other statistical evidence, the author has written a comprehensive and detailed study of acculturation of the Irish in San Francisco. Chapters on family life and on voluntary associations (in addition to those on religion and politics) demonstrate that the Irish community was remarkably cohesive and its members ultimately very successful in adjusting to the new society to which they had immigrated.

Cronin, Bernard Cornelius, Father Yorke and the Labor Movement in San Francisco, 1900-1910. Washington, D.C. : The Catholic University Press, 1943.

In this published dissertation, the author examines the role played by the Irish Catholic priest, Reverend Peter C. Yorke, in the San Francisco labor movement at the turn of the century. Cronin describes the structure of labor relations in the City in 1901 and the influence of the Irish Catholic church on labor organizations. In particular, the prominent role of Irish in the formation and leadership of organized labor is examined. This work is based on research in San Francisco newspapers and periodicals of the period as well as interviews with union organizers active at the turn of the century.

Brusher, Joseph S., "Peter Yorke and the A.P.A. in San Francisco," in The Catholic Historical Review, Vol. xxxvii, no. 2 Washington, D.C. : The Catholic University Press of America, July 1951.

Examines the history of the fight against anti-Catholic sentiment in San Francisco during the early 1900s. This sentiment was fostered by the American Protective Organization and was fought publicly by the flamboyant Father Yorke, spokesman for the underclass. Based primarily upon research in the prominent city newspapers of the time, the author provides into the issues of religion, ethnicity, and the struggle for political power in San Francisco during the late 19th century.

Walsh, James P., "The Irish in the New America: 'Way Out West," in America and Ireland, 1776-1976: The American Indentity and the Irish Connection. Edited by David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards. Ireland : The Proceedings of the United States Bicentennial Conference of Cumann Merriman, Ennis, August 1976.

Outlines the experience of the California Irish and contrasts it with that of the rest of Irish America in the years 1848-1920. The author examines the impact of the rapid growth of San Francisco upon its social formation and the influential position of the Catholic Church in California's development. The author has done research on the Irish in San Francisco for nearly twenty years now and has no doubt published the most extensively on the subject. In addition to the informational value of his published works, the bibliographies provided are always very useful to the reader who wishes to carry out further study of the topic.

Erie, Steven P., "Politics, the Public Sector and Irish Social Mobility: San Francisco, 1870-1900," in The Western Political Quarterly, Vol. XXXI, No. 2, June 1978.

An empirical examination of the "political" model of Irish social mobility in late 19th and 20th century urban America. Examines the relationship between Irish political and economic success in San Francisco with those of New England cities of the same period. This is an individual level study of ethnic social mobility in the public and private sectors which compares the experience of the Irish in San Francisco with that of Boston and New York in the 19th century. Based on federal census reports, city municipal reports and secondary sources, this article is a bit dense and cumbersome to read, but provides some useful statistics for comparative purposes.

Cross, Ira B. (ed.), Frank Roney. Irish Rebel and California Labor Leader. An Autobiography. Berkeley, University of California Press. 1931.

A personal account of a labor activist who dominated the labor movement of San Francisco during 1881-1886. Covers his years as a child and youth in Belfast, Ireland; his participation in the Fenian Movement in Ireland; immigration to the New World and to San Francisco in 1875; years in San Francisco as a labor organizer. Provides good coverage of early labor organizing efforts in San Francisco -- the people and the issues.

Bibliographical Works;

Meatress, Seamus, The Irish-American Experience: A Guide to the Literature, Washington: University Press of America, 1981.

The wide range of titles offered in this bibliography confirms the varied and complicated history of Irish-American life. Organized by general topics (migration, labor, church politics, etc.) as well as by geographic regions (e.g. "The Irish in the Far West"), there are 2,500 titles listed. This bibliography deals largely with the literature related to the fields of anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, social psychology and sociology. Selections are chosen from a wide variety of sources and include scientific journals, dissertations, books, and popular periodicals. It does not include personal papers from archival collections or the variety of government documents on immigration, nor does it include literature on Irish-Americans in the arts and literature. This work was the most valuable source I found and was a tremendous aid in helping to identify sources on the Irish in the Far West.

Doyle, David Noel, "The regional bibliography of Irish America, 1800-1930: a Review and Addendum," in Irish Historical Studies, Vol. XXIII, no. 91, May 1983.

This scholarly article provides an excellent historical overview of the historiography of the American Irish and demonstrates the significance of regional studies in understanding the range of experience that affected immigrants of various backgrounds. The review provides a detailed evaluation of Metress' bibliography (cited above) and includes a supplementary listing of titles that were omitted from that work.

America: History and Life. A Guide to Periodical Literature. Vol. I, no.I, July 1964 -. Santa Barbara, Calif. : Clio Press, 1964.

A comprehensive continuing bibliography of current scholarly articles, books, and dissertations on American history (essentially, the U.S. and Canada). The annual index appears to offer a good coverage of recent academic writing on Irish-Americans. The 1985 annual index lists 16 books and articles under the heading, "Irish-American."

Historical Abstracts. Santa Barbara, Calif. and London, England : ABC-Clio, 1955 to present.

This "bibliography of the world's historical literature" (subtitle) is divided into Part A: Modern history abstracts 1450 - 1914, and Part B: Twentieth century abstracts, 1914 - present. Since it covers the entire world the abstracts are necessarily much briefer than the entries in America: History and Life. Nevertheless, Historical Abstracts is useful because it indexes all historical literature on Ireland. It therefore includes material on the background to Irish immigration to America, while American: History and Life covers this topic only sporadically.

Miller, Wayne Charles, with Faye Nell Vowell, et. al., A Comprehensive Bibliography for the Study of American Minorities, New York : New York University Press, 1976. 2 volumes.

Volume I, pp. 38l-422, covers Irish Americans. Now somewhat dated, this bibliography is still the standard overall guide to the literature on American minorities. As is stated in the preface, one of its purposes is to "encourage students of one minority ... to take a broader, perhaps comparative approach." It's value should perhaps be judged in that light, since a researcher can compare, say, the entries und "politics" for two ethnic groups (e.g. Irish - Americans and Italian - Americans) if he or she is undertaking a comparison of the political beliefs and activities of both groups.

Eager, Alan R., A Guide to Irish Bibliographical Material: A Bibliography of Irish Bibliographies and Sources of Information, 2nd edition, The Library Association, London, 1980.

This bibliography is concerned with the Irish in Ireland, although there is a section on the Irish abroad; 50 entries treat the Irish in America. It includes bibliographies appended to books and articles, as well as standard works and articles appearing in newspapers not cataloged elsewhere. The introduction reviews the literature on the history of the Catholic Church in America with no particular reference to the Irish. The bibliography itself consists only of a listing of authors, so it is not practically useful as a primary source of information.

Cordasco, Francesco and Alloway, David N., American Ethnic Groups: The European Heritage. A bibliography of doctoral dissertations completed at American universities. New Jersey : Scarecrow Press, 1981.

The authors have culled some 1,400 American doctoral dissertations concerning American ethnic groups of European origin from the Dissertation Abstracts International (1938 -), using the Comprehensive Dissertation Index, 1861-1972. As the authors state in the preface, their selection criteria were very broad. The Great Britain and Ireland section includes some 88 dissertations. The authors rely on the original citation in Dissertation Abstracts, although they at least indicate whether the dissertation was subsequently published and provide a citation to the published work.

Reference

Reviews in American History. Johns Hopkins University Press. This quarterly journal contains rather lengthy interpretive reviews of recent books on U.S. and Canadian history. Each issue contains about 20 reviews, including a short section that reassess older (i.e. non-current) major works in the light of recent scholarship. While this journal has to be somewhat selective in its coverage, it appears to have made an effort to cover major works on ethnic groups in the U.S., including Irish-Americans.

Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups. Cambridge : Harvard University Press, 1980.

Over 100 ethnic groups are described in this outstanding reference work. Prepared by a group of distinquished scholars, the volume contains 29 thematic essays on such topics as "American Identity and Americanization," which are quite relevant. The excellent essay on the Irish by historian Patrick Blessing covers the cultural, social and economic life of the Irish in Ireland, as well as immigration and assimilation to American society.

-6-

Freidel, Frank, (ed.) Harvard Guide to American History, Rev. ed. Cambridge, Mass. : Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1974. 2 vols.

In addition to being an all-around excellent source to the study of American history, the Harvard Guide contains section devoted to Irish immigration. Also have sections on state and local histories, including bibliographies. Volume 1 is topical, covering twenty-nine various subjects, while Volume 2 is a chronological history.

Lamar, Howard Robert. The Reader's Encyclopedia of the American West. New York : Crowell, 1977.

This text provides a good, quick reference source to general questions about the West. According to the author, the encyclopedia does not follow a single interpretation of western history, but has gathered contributors from a variety of viewpoints. Relevant sections include an eight page section on California history; a four page history of San Francisco; a two page section on Irish immigration to the West and a general essay on immigrants. There is no index.

Billington, Ray Allen and Martin Ridge. Westward Expansion: A History of the American Frontier. New York : MacMillan, 1982. 5th ed.

Ray Allen Billington has long been one of the great authorities on the history of the West. In this edition, co-author Martin Ridge has made extensive revisions, updating much of the book to conform to current approaches to history. The scope of the text runs from the Colonial frontier to the turn of the twentieth century. Included is an introduction on "The Frontier Hypothesis," and a conclusion summing up America's "Frontier Heritage." Unfortunately, there is little discussion of the role of immigration in the settling of the frontier.

Journals

Eire-Ireland. Minnesota. Irish American Cultural Institute, 1966 - .

This journal features articles on Irish history, culture, arts, and creative writing, with a special book review section. The magazine's main objective is to promote the study of Irish civilization, with an emphasis on the interrelationship between Irish and American culture.

Irish Historical Studies. Dublin ; Irish Historical Society, 1938 -

This joint publication of the Irish Historical Society and the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies deals with all aspects of Irish history and civilization with slightly greater attention to post-17th century material, including materials on immigrtion to America. Authors are predominantly Irish, but occasionally British or other academic historians.

Journal of American History. Indiana. Organization of American Historians, 1914 - .

All periods and topics are covered in this excellent journal. Issues contain articles, up to 100 signed reviews, book notes, news and comments (which includes material about archives and bibliographies and research guides).

Labor History. New York. Taminent Institute, New York University. 1960 - .

Publishes original research on labor history, studies of specific unions and of the impact of labor problems upon ethnic and minority groups. Also includes biographical portraits of labor figures. Authors are scholars, mainly professors of history at American universities.

Unpublished Sources

Blessing, Patrick J., Westward Among Strangers: Irish migration to California, 1850-1880, (Unpublished dissertation). University of California, Los Angeles. 1977.

A quantitative study of the movement of Irish to California, 1830-1850. Based on 2,000 biographies of Irish males, the author examines experiences in place of origin, on the journey west, and at destination. He concludes that the reasons for westward migration had to do with desire for improved economic conditions that existed in the West. There is a good deal of information about traditional Irish culture and the transfer of those traditions to American society through the process of immigrant adaptation to the new environment.

Weaver, Jack W., Immigrants from Great Britain and Ireland: A guide to archival and manuscript sources in North America, compiled by Jack W. Weaver and Dee Gee Lester. Connecticut : Greenwood Press, 1986. XIV. (Reference guides to archives and manuscript collections on immigrant culture; no. I)

The Immigrant in America: Guide to the Microfilm Collection. Woodbridge, Connecticut and Reading, England. 1984.

Research Publications has issued a huge collection of material on microfilm relevant to the immmigrant experience in America, including 14 reels on the Irish. However, there is currently only a "temporary guide" to this material, which consists only of a "main-entry index" and a "title listing", which allows the researcher to locate the particular reel on which an item is located. However, it does not index the content of the books, journals, and pamphlets included in the collection. The Irish-American materials comprises material published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, including memoirs, novels, dramatic works, poems, and sermons. However, the boundaries of such a collection would have to be somewhat arbritrary.

Manuscript and non-book sources

There are a wide range of manuscript collections, personal and family letters, political pamphlets and other non-book materials relevant to the study of the Irish in California in a number of Bay Area repositories: The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, the California Historical Society and the Society of California Pioneers in San Francisco. Additionally, the Archdiosese of San Francisco is a good source of primary information on parish and family life in San Francisco.

UNITED IRISH CULTURAL CENTER, INC.
2700
SAN FRAN